

9 Sept 85

CBS EVENING NEWS
7:00 P.M.CBS-TV
SEPTEMBER 9Thai Coup Attempt Crushed

DAN RATHER: Troops loyal to the government of Thailand today crushed a coup attempt. The attempt was led by a disgruntled former Army colonel. Four people died in this brief military challenge. Two of the dead were Western journalists.

David Jackson is in Bangkok.

DAVID JACKSON: Today's attempted coup began, as others have in the past, with tanks controlled by a rebellious Army faction rolling through the streets, and rebels taking over some key government buildings.

This group, known as the Young Turks, said they were taking over to press for economic reforms.

Violence is not the rule in Thailand's many coups and attempted coups. There've been well over a dozen in the last 50 years, most very peaceful. But in some parts of Bangkok today was an exception.

Sporadic shooting occurred as the rebels moved in on their objectives, including the Supreme Military Headquarters and an Army radio station that was still broadcasting the government line. It was here that rebel gunfire cut down an NBC news camera crew: cameraman Neil Davis, an Australian, and his American soundman, Bill Latch. Davis was killed instantly. His camera kept recording throughout. As it lay on the ground, it captured the tragic event on tape. Latch died several hours later in a hospital.

Neil Davis was a fixture in the Asian press corps. He covered wars here for more than 20 years, from Vietnam to

Cambodia. He'd been wounded several times. He always told newcomers to play it safe. But at the same time, wherever there was a story, there was Neil.

NEIL DAVIS: I was never afraid of being killed, because that's that. I mean you're done.

JACKSON: The rebels surrendered their tanks and guns in less than 12 hours. It all ended as it began, like so many other coups here, quietly. But it took the lives of two outstanding professionals.

Military Shuttle Mission

RATHER: The news space shuttle Atlantis goes up next month for the first time, carrying the shuttle program's second officially secret military payload. But CBS News Pentagon correspondent David Martin didn't have much trouble solving the mystery.

DAVID MARTIN: The space shuttle Atlantis sits eerily on the pad, waiting for its next maiden voyage, a military mission scheduled for October 3rd. The Pentagon says it will not release any information about what's on board, but it's easy to find out.

JOHN PIKE: It looks like it's going to be a pair of defense satellite communications system satellites, the so-called Discus 3, that provide communication services for the military, for the State Department [unintelligible].

MARTIN: The Atlantis will boost the satellite into an orbit 22,000 miles above the earth. The Air Force said as much four years ago in a press release, and Pike confirmed it with his own research.

So why, if it's so easy to find out what's on board the Atlantis, does the Pentagon classify it as a secret?